

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION PROJECT: Student Perceptions of Academic Advising and Influence on Retention: A study of First-Semester, First-Generation and Continuing-Generation College Students at a Liberal Arts College

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This study examined a full cohort of first-time, full-time college students to better understand perceptions, preferences, and satisfaction with academic advising and influence of these factors on intent to persist. Early in the transition to college, students are at risk for departure; more so for those whose parents did not attend college.

A quantitative research design was used to investigate the relationship of advising styles, generational status, and the influence of advisors on intent to persist. Post-hoc analysis of open-ended responses to students' persistence decisions provided additional insights for institutional persistence strategies. The research was conducted at a small, Midwest, private, four-year institution that relies on faculty to provide academic advising. Students enrolled in a required first-year experience course were surveyed ($n = 304$) using a modified version of Winston and Sandor's (1984b) Academic Advising Inventory (AAI).

This study contributes to a growing body of knowledge on first-semester student advising, and first-generation students at a time when both are more closely examined in

order to improve retention and success. By studying a full cohort of students, this study provides a well-rounded view of first-year students. The research found that those who perceive and prefer developmental advising are more satisfied and likely to persist.

Generational status was not a factor in advising perceptions, satisfaction, or preference.

The results reinforced previous research that the majority of college students preferred developmental advising, but contradicted previous results that freshmen, at-risk or under resourced students preferred prescriptive advising. Recommendations for future research are provided.